

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 TUNIS 02565 121718Z

44

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 NSC-05

SP-02 SS-15 MC-02 AID-05 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00

NEAE-00 OMB-01 ACDA-07 EB-07 TRSE-00 /066 W

----- 033825

O R 121650Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2364

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 2565

USCINCEUR ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O.: 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, TS

SUBJ: GOT REQUEST FOR TANK REPAIR PARTS AND HAWK MISSILES

REF : CHUSLOT TUNIS 2537 DTG 091200 APR 76, TUNIS 1868,  
DTG 161417Z MAR 76, STATE 65658 DTG 180216Z MAR 76

1. BASED SOLELY ON CHUSLOT'S CONVERSATION WITH DEFMIN SECRETARY OF STATE (DEPUTY MINISTER) BENNOUR APRIL 9, EMBASSY'S JUDGMENT IS THAT BENNOUR TOOK GREAT HEAT FROM GOT CABINET OVERLPOOR STATE OF TUNISIAN MILITARY READINESS. BENNOUR MAY WELL HAVE DEFENDED HIMSELF WITH ARGUMENT THAT USG HAS BEEN NEGLIGENT IN FILLING DEFENSE MINISTRY'S SPARE PARTS ORDERS. INTERESTING ASPECT OF CHUSLOT'S CONVERSATION WITH BENNOUR IS EXTREMELY MODEST LEVEL OF ASSISTANCE REQUESTED WITH RESPECT TO TUNISIAN GROUND FORCES. BENNOUR SEEKS, IN ESSENCE, ONLY TO RENDER TUNISIA'S MEAGER ARMORED FORCE OPERATIONAL, NOT TO AUGMENT IT WITH EMERGENCY DELIVERIES OF NEW WEAPONS.

2. EMBASSY APPRECIATEDS DOD'S PROMPT AND FAVORABLE RESPONSE TO CHUSLOT'S MESSAGE RE TANK SPARES. PROVIDED REQUESTED ITEMS CAN BE LOCATED PROMPTLY AND DELIVERED BY AIR, SUCH ACTION WILL  
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PAGE 02 TUNIS 02565 121718Z

DEMONSTRATE USG'S RESPONSIVENESS AT LITTLE COST, WITHOUT NEW



COMMITMENT TO MILITARY ASSISTANCE, AND AT TIME IFTTLOOT (AND IMPORTANT INDIVIDUALS WITHIN GOT) ARE FEELING POLITICAL AND MILITARY PRESSURES.

3. BENNOUR'S STATEMENT THAT HE AWAITS OFFICIAL RESPONSE TO REQUEST FOR \$250 MILLION FMS CREDIT TO APPLY TO HAWK PURCHASE REQUIRES ATTENTION. OUR RECORDS SHOW THAT BENNOUR RAISED SUBJECT WITH AMB. SEELYE MARCH 15 (TUNIS 1868). AMBASSADOR CAUTIONED HIM THAT ADDITIONAL FMS CREDITS WOULD BE DIFFICULT, AND MATTER WAS LEFT THAT BENNOUR WOULD DISCUSS SUBJECT FURTHER WITH HIS MINISTER. AT SAME TIME (MARCH 16) GOT AMB. HEDDA WAS TELLING ASST. SECY. ATHERTON (STATE 65658) THAT GOT KNEW HAWK WAS TOO EXPENSIVE, BUT NEEDED WHATEVER ADDITIONAL HELP USG MIGHT AFFORD. ATHERTON UNDERTOOK TO REVIEW QUESTION OF FURTHER ASSISTANCE, AND RESPOND LATER THOUGH HE UNDERLINED HE NOT OPTIMISTIC ABOUT ADDITIONAL USG CREDITS.

4. BENNOUR MAY HAVE BEEN TALKING TO CHUSLTO PARTLY FOR THE RECORD. HOWEVER, IN FOLLOW-UP TALK WITH MOD LIAISON OFFICER APRIL 12, CHUSLOT WAS TOLD THAT QUESTION OF DECIDING HOW TO USE FY 1976 FMS CREDITS COULD NOT BE ADDRESSED UNTIL OFFICIAL ANSWER GIVEN BY USG TO BENNOUR RE INCREASED CREDITS AND HWAK PURCHASE. AT SAME TIME, WE HAVE NO INDICATION GOT AS A WHOLE HAS DECIDED ON MAJOR CAMPAIGN TO OBTAIN HAWK. ALTHOUGH INTENSITY OF CONFRONTATION WITH LIBYA HAS INCREASED GREATLY SINCE MARCH 22, WITH ANNOUNCEMENT OF ARREST OF LIBYAN ASSASSINATION TEAM, AND WHILE MOD LIAISON OFFICER STATES THAT PRINCIPAL SECURITY PROBLEM FOR TUNISIA IS RISK OF LIBYAN AIR STRIKES AND GOT FEELS HELPLESS AGAINST THEM, EMBASSY STILL DOUBTS THAT PRIME MINISTER AND OTHER INFLUENTIAL GOT MEMBERS ARE FULLY BEHINDLHAWK REQUEST.

5. DEPARTMENT MAY WISH, ACCORDINGLY, TO CONSIDER HOW ASST. SECY. ATHERTON MAY WISH REPLY TO AMB. HEDDA, SHOULD LATTER RAISE AGAIN THE CREDITS/HAWK PACKAGE QUESTION. WE WOULD HOPE, BY WAITING A FEW DAYS, TO LEARN MORE ACCURATELY WHETHER BENNOUR'S STATEMENT REPRESENTED GOT POLICY; BUT NOT TOO FAR DOWN THE ROAD, WE WILL HAVE TO TELL HIM SOMETHING.  
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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
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**To:** STATE  
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